

# Building robust local economies through decentralisation: a case study of women-owned agriculture cooperatives in India

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## Abstract

Despite having the highest arable land globally, India's per-hectare productivity continues to remain low. The highly fragmented nature of Indian farming, with close to 33% of arable land held in units of less than 2 hectares per owner, doesn't allow the farmers to avail the economies of scale in operations. These fragmented farms also constrain the risk-taking ability of Indian farmers, locking them up in a cycle of poverty, and leading to low investments, hence low margins and value additions. This percolates into low productivity and weak market orientation.

In this context, the cases of two women-owned cooperatives - Kheda Cooperative and Megha Cooperative's - and their hyperlocal 'phygital' models of decentralised governance - Farmer Facilitation Centres (FFC) - have equipped us to understand the beginnings of a blueprint for women-owned collective business models that are sustainable and scalable. Through collectivising women farmers in such trade-based collective enterprises, individual farmers are able to aggregate resources, information and knowledge, demand better prices, and increase yield.

With these case studies, SEWA Cooperative Federation members, decentralised governance has been put into practice through FFC. These are one-stop facilitation centres for service support, sales outlets for farm produce and marketing facilities for agricultural inputs. They aim to enable the farming community to easily access information on technology, the package of practices, input sources, market channels and financial assistance. It has been found to be a single window delivery of need-based services for the local farmers built by their involvement and inputs. Participation of local farmers, with women as decision-makers, has ensured provision of adequate and decipherable information to the centre, which has been employed in the farming, or pricing of the produce. As it is focused on local market systems and benefits through economies of scale and better bargaining power. The cooperative-led co-design approach directly engages those at the base of the pyramid in decision-making processes. Moreover, through the federated structure, it is further able to gain economies of scale.

This paper has aimed to review the building of these inclusive design processes of FFCs. To do this, it analyses how the local farmer communities collaboratively guide the design and development of the cooperative data trust and inclusive data governance toolkit. It has further looked into aspects of decentralised models, that are community-owned and governed through women-owned cooperatives to help in robust local economic development and nation-building.

**Keywords:** Women's labour force participation, decentralised governance, local economies, women's cooperatives/collectives, agriculture

## **1. Introduction**

The Indian economy is predominantly agrarian, with the agriculture sector contributing to around 18.8 per cent of the total GDP (MSPI, 2021). It provides livelihood to about 46 per cent of the total labour force (NITI Ayog, 2022) and accounts for USD 50 billions of India's exports (MCI, 2022). This sector employs 80 per cent of all economically active women in India, comprising 33 per cent of the agriculture labour force and 48 per cent of the self-employed farmers (Oxfam India, 2018).

Despite its large share in terms of employment, the sector is still fraught with challenges that farmers, particularly women farmers, face. Given the highly fragmented nature of land ownership, it makes it difficult for the farmers to avail the economies of scale and given the low prevalence of land ownership among women, they tend to be relatively more insecure than their male counterparts (Agarwal, B., Anthwal, R. and Malvika, M. 2020). This further constrains the risk-taking abilities, locking them up in a cycle of poverty, and leading to low investments, hence low margins, and value additions. This percolates into low productivity and weak market orientation, which is further aggravated by a lack of information dissemination.

With India's economic reforms in 1991, and the increased privatisation of markets, the agriculture sector has become industrialised, however, the workers still are dominantly informal, without work and income security or social protections. The industrialisation of farming has given rise to the intermediaries that operate in the supply chain. These intermediaries capitalise on the economies of information and economies of physical things, which are tied together in a bundle. They block the flow of market information to these small farmers and use that information asymmetry for their own good. The fragmented farms, weak infrastructure, and the involvement of numerous intermediaries block critical market information from passing to the farmers and use that information for getting a big margin for themselves. Here, poor farmers are squeezed to the maximum without the benefits of their labour accruing to them but to the intermediaries.

Moreover, women in farming own fewer assets (land, livestock, human capital), and have less access to inputs (seeds, fertiliser, labour, finance) and services (training, insurance,) than men (World Bank, 2017). Coupled with this, women carry an unequal share of unpaid care work within the household, which severely curtails their ability to engage with the paid labour market (Folbre, 2018).

One model of community-led shifts, through economic and decision-making routes, has been cooperatives. Located in ideas of democratic participation, representation and inclusion, asset-building, transparency, among others, cooperatives have historically been empowering for women workers of the informal economy. Recognising the potential of cooperatives, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) established several cooperatives, across sectors, and a SEWA Cooperative Federation. The role of the Federation is to provide an enabling ecosystem to women-owned, women-led cooperatives, as well as build knowledge and advocate for these collective forms of enterprise and entrepreneurship.

This paper analyses how women-owned, cooperative models of governance and enterprise have alleviated some of the challenges and risks associated with agriculture. It does so using the case study of Megha Cooperative - a collective enterprise of 1001 indigenous women farmers in the Tapi district of Gujarat. And Kheda Cooperative, which is still in the formation phase. In particular, the paper looks at how the utilisation of hyper-local centres - here, Farmer Facilitation Centres - have reached the economic and social gains from farming activities to the end users - women farmers, acting as bridges and enabling agency of farmers, particularly women farmers.

### **About the Megha Indigenous Women Farmers' Cooperative:**

Megha Indigenous Women Farmers' Cooperative in Tapi district, south Gujarat, is a cooperative of 1001 women farmers (ILO, 2018). It is roughly 250 miles away from the capital city of Gandhinagar, Gujarat. In 2014, Megha was

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established as a cooperative, linking women farmers to agriculture inputs - seed, fertilisers, tools, information, and training; as well as market linkages locally and outside the district.

Apart from being an agri-business enterprise, which sells agricultural inputs (seeds, tools), services, and conducts organic farming training, the cooperative also works on linking members to health awareness and resources, insurance, banking institutions, and credit (SEWA Cooperative Federation, 2020). It also emphasises training and capacity-building of members through leadership training, exposure visits to field sites of other organisations, and non-farm-based skill training.

### About the Farmers Facilitation Centres (FFC):

The FFC model is positioned as an alternative to traditional value chain processes and activities in agriculture where farmers travel long distances to the government markets (or mandis) to buy inputs and sell their produce. Under this model, local one-stop facilitation centres are envisioned that enable the farming community to easily access - (i) **information** related to the markets and prices, new farming techniques and technology, and government schemes; (ii) **crop inputs** such as seeds, fertilizers, and equipment; (iii) **output marketing support** to diversify their marketing channels and ensure better pricing for their products; and (iv) **financial assistance** for livelihood purposes.

Currently, two FFCs are operational in Tapi district. They are completely owned, run, and managed by women members of Megha Indigenous Women Farmers' Cooperative. These centres work as 'phygital' (combining aspects of physical and digital) models that provide farmers with agricultural inputs, information on new farming techniques, and marketing support for their farm produce at the village level. The key stakeholders involved in this value chain are the direct procurement agencies; the local farmers, especially the women farmers; the governing members of the cooperatives.

One centre, referred to as the main centre in the paper, is located in Tapi district, roughly 250 miles away from the capital city of Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The second centre is further 60 kms away from the main centre.

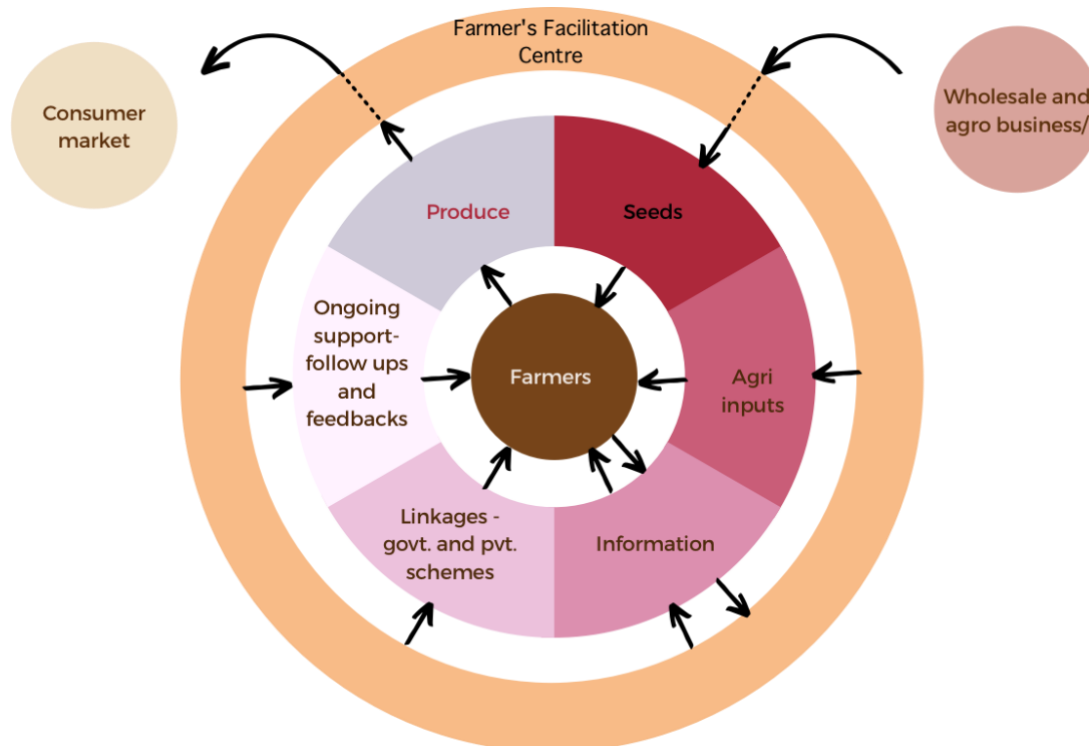


Figure 1: Representation of Farmers Facilitation Centre

## 2. Methodology

The paper is based firmly in participatory, action-oriented research methodologies. The underlying principle behind this is derived from feminist standpoint theories, which situate knowledge production with participants and seek to showcase this to an external audience. Using this principle, the paper uses qualitative methods, largely focused-group discussions and interviews, undertaken using a semi-structured methodology.

The tool was developed thematically, followed by thematic analysis, with the overarching purpose to derive key insights for understanding an effective, decentralised model, through an examination of FFCs.

For attaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of the decentralised-phygital FFC model as the complex embedded phenomenon that it is, it is important to undertake an in-depth inquiry of the process, examining contextual nuances and allowing for a situated understanding to emerge, rather than approaching the study from a predetermined set of theoretical frameworks.

Since the paper explores 'how' and 'why' kinds of research questions, our focus was on understanding the processual dynamics of the FFC.

### 2.1 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were typically conducted with a series of questions in the general form of an interview schedule. The interviewer also had some freedom to probe and explore additional questions in response to what was seen as significant replies. An interview schedule was prepared in advance with the structure and flow of the interview. Each participant was presented with questions relating to their overall experiences of building or being a user of the FFC. The questions were open-ended, in order to help the researcher, build a more-in-depth knowledge of the functioning of the FFCs.

To investigate, the questions were thematically based on:

- Formation of the FFC
- Governance and decision-making, with respect to both local actors, as well as the larger cooperative within which the FFC was located
- Women and community participation
- Digital inclusion and data dissemination, through FFCs

The language used was comprehensible and relevant to each of the participants being interviewed. All the participants were contacted through SEWA Cooperative Federation and Megha Cooperative. The field visit to Vyara in Tapi District was conducted to see and understand the main facilitation centre of Megha Cooperative. In-depth Interviews were conducted with the board members, Manager, and President of the Cooperative. A visit to the sub-centre in Narangpura, which is 60 km away from the main centre, was conducted to interview users of the FFC - all farmers, but a mixed group of men and women in farming. The researchers also spoke to community leaders to understand their role in the maintenance of the FFC. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with the board members, and technical support partners from the SEWA Cooperative Federation. Women farmers were also contacted in Kheda district of Gujarat. A brief review of their financial statements was also done to assess the model for its financial sustainability.

### 2.2 Data analysis

The data after being transcribed was collated under the focus areas, analysed, interpreted, and verified. The process of transcribing the interviews helped to gain more understanding of the subject from repeatedly listening to and reading the transcribed interviews. The keywords based on the focus areas were used to categorise or organise text. The data

was then analysed, categorised, and organised into themes. Further interpreting the data by identifying any recurring themes throughout and highlighting any similarities and differences in the data. The final stage involved data verification, which involved checking the validity of understanding by rechecking the transcripts and emerging themes, thus allowing to verify or modify hypotheses already arrived at previously.

### 3. Limitations of the study

While undertaking this research, some limitations were encountered. These are discussed briefly below:

- Most notably, participants were from two agricultural cooperatives which limited the number of participants for the research. Therefore, one has to be cautious in generalising from the findings. It is beneficial to carry out the research on a larger and more in-depth scale in order to allow a more comprehensive analysis of the study.
- The research was conducted in a timespan of one month. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews was useful in gaining in-depth and meaningful data from the participants, however, the method of in-depth interviewing was a time-consuming process which could have altered the results to some extent.
- Researcher bias is always a risk in any type of research study, more so, the less structured the data collection is. These researchers have tried to be aware, although it is impossible to eliminate research bias, the researcher is confident to have achieved valid findings, which can be used for larger populations.

### 4. Findings and Discussion

The cooperative model of organisation has historically enabled workers' voices to be centred, and power to reach those at the base of the pyramid, through democratic processes and participation. This overarching result has seen to be realised in the case studies of SEWA Cooperative Federation's rural, agriculture cooperatives in Tapi and Kheda districts of Gujarat.

The communities in Vyara and Kheda have faced challenges in terms of accessibility, availability and affordability of agricultural products and services. Their geographical locations coupled with constraints in their risk-taking abilities have locked them up in a cycle of poverty. Here, these cooperatives have played a key role in strengthening the weak market orientation which was aggravated by lack of information dissemination. They have increased local participation, especially the women, in a democratic manner. This enabled an increase in the involvement of women in decision-making with respect to their agricultural inputs and outputs.

There are three main themes that emerged while analysing factors that enabled the FFC to be an effective model 1) Decentralised "aagewan" (community leader) network 2) Contextualised tools based on community needs 3) Democratic decision-making through farmer-members.

#### 1. Decentralised 'Aagewan' network

An aagewan is a community leader - 'aage' - the word for 'coming forward', and in the context of SEWA (Sen and Atkin, 2020), it refers to local community leaders of women. The deeply embedded aagewan network in 40 villages had played a significant role in making the decentralised model of the cooperative rooted and robust. The emergence of the need to have a Farmers' Facilitation Centre was a result of this nested network.

In the pre-COVID period, the houses of local community leaders acted as small-scale centres where farming inputs were stored and sold at the village level. However, the agricultural supply chain got disrupted during the pandemic due to the unavailability of transportation to the remote village areas, and accessibility and availability of farming inputs, markets, and information became a pressing issue for the rural farming community. Looking at this challenge as an opportunity, the idea of FFC came into being.

Sangitaben of Chichbardi village in Tapi's Vyara taluka, Board member and aagewan with Megha Cooperative, mentions the emergence of the idea to have a centre in one of her community meetups, *"There were no means of transportation and the cost of procuring any agricultural inputs had peaked post-COVID. A thought to collectively, based on everyone's needs and future demands, create a centre which could reduce the cost of travel and also provide quality products in small quantities came from one of the female farmer shareholders. This idea was agreed upon by everyone and was further taken to different villages by other community leaders."*

The network had further facilitated deliberations around the implementation of this idea. This entailed picking up a location for the main centre at block-level and identifying accessible locations for sub-centres at the village-level, in a way that would mutually benefit every member in these 40 villages and its supply to the other eight-nine villages in Gujarat, India.

This consensus enabled setting and standardising a checklist of pre-conditions required for opening a sub-centre in other locations.

Once the centre was set-up, the operational aspects of the farmer facilitation centres were also managed by the community leaders, encompassing the identification of the needs of farmers and the collection of data on priority demands of the farmers in their villages. This information was collated centrally at the main farmer facilitation centre, contributing to farmers' own database on their collective needs. The gathered information enables all members of the cooperative to take mutually agreed decisions for the interest of the farming community at large.

Furthermore, the community leaders were represented at diverse levels in the FFC and the cooperative, which enabled direct engagement of those at the base of the pyramid in the decision-making processes. Each village had nominated a woman community leader as their representative at the main centre of the cooperative. One-third of those community leaders were provided representation on the board of directors in the cooperative.



Figure 2: Monthly meeting with the Aagewans (source SEWA Cooperative Federation)

Overall, the community leaders' network had played a salient role in expanding the reach of cooperative FFCs by being the main driving force as decision-makers and ambassadors who advocated for its work. The structure of aagewans had also ensured that they increased the overall membership size of the cooperative by extending practical livelihood support

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to the farmers whilst advocating for their rights and entitlements by bringing their voices to the cooperative, that further enabled collective bargaining.

The role of aagewan network in data collection and information dissemination amongst the farming community was crucial in the development of a 'phygital' FFC model - aagewans representing the physical component. Unlike traditional farming businesses, where information resources and information are withheld by individuals or groups of individuals who are men (Cheema, A., Khan, S., Liaqat, A., & Mohmand, S. K. (2022), this network has facilitated women marginal farmers' access and created opportunities for cross-learning.

Better response to a crisis situation was enabled by the community leaders, as witnessed during the COVID pandemic. The aagewan network, of SEWA in general, and of Megha Cooperative in particular, was also a crucial lever in relaying COVID-related resources to the last mile - medicines, masks, food and information. The network increased its outreach from 383 farmers in the previous year to 565 farmers this year.

## 2. Contextualised tools and strategy based on community needs

Needs of local communities tend to be highly contextual, which demand contextual responses. The decentralised and hyperlocal model of cooperatives (and FFCs) enabled aagewans to transfer specific knowledge and resources from the source (farmers) to the node (the FFC), and onward to the destination (farms).

This helped a two-way communication between otherwise disparate and disconnected communities. This also helped the overall farm economy in two ways - firstly, the information asymmetry on which the intermediaries thrive had come down, thereby getting the farmers closer to market-linked gains for productivity and demand; and secondly, the FFC had also become a repository of traditional knowledge, with implications for both the preservation of ideas and the future of work.

It was observed that the use of some forms of digital technologies had catalyzed the above-mentioned exchanges. It contributed to the collection and collation of specific needs of farmers, sharing of important information, and sometimes conducting training, on efficient use of farm inputs, and resolving their problems. This constituted members' seamless interaction with the 'digital' in this "phygital" space.

The FFC acted as a hub for all the information in terms of the needs and challenges of the farmers and disseminated relevant information through digital platforms, which were accessible to most of them - most noticeably, through the use of WhatsApp groups. The cooperative had organised farmer members into two groups and had an overall participation of 500 members. The two-way information sharing helped farmers be on a common platform and learn from each other on best cropping practices, know the price of produce in the market, and access new schemes for farmers. This had particularly contributed to women farmers' access to knowledge resources, as male members of the farming community often held these.

This platform had, therefore, become a nodal point for gathering and organising farmer data. The farmers used this to receive information from the members running the centre as well as to share methods, learning and outcome with respect to their yields.

The way information was disseminated played a vital role in the cooperatives - to create practical tools which are able to create the kinds of outcomes that communities need. Participation of local farmers, with women as decision-makers, ensures the provision of adequate and decipherable information to the centre, which was employed by aagewans for individual interventions with farmers that were carried out through visits to the members' farms. This resulted in better yields for the farmers who faced specific challenges in cropping better and gaining information on the price setting of the produce.

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As a part of the FFC's services, information about all the agricultural inputs relevant to the farmer's needs was enabled by contextual information with the cooperative and aagewans on the soil quality, climate conditions, and water availability in the area.

Ratilaben Bhikhubhai Chaudhari, Aagewan and member of the cooperative, explained:

*"The exchange of information on WhatsApp has helped farmers in terms of awareness around new developments in agriculture. It has also helped us in understanding their needs, demands, challenges and their interests much better. We have been able to record this information and use the same to make data-driven decisions for the next few seasons. This has enabled us in ascertaining willingness from farmers to actively learn and thus keeping us motivated to do more of what we do"*

The centre had actively promoted women farmers' participation in various ways. As observed by the members of the cooperative, the male farmers were usually involved in the procurement of seeds and a lot of information pertaining to farming was limited to them. As a practice at the centre, they had been taking in details of the male farmers as well as their women counterparts. They follow up with the women by calling them to become a part of the training and various activities organised at the centre.

As observed during our conversation with the male farmers who have been actively involved in procuring seeds for their farmlands from FFC, the centres near their villages had made it accessible for women, children and old people. Thus, it expanded women's role and access in an otherwise male-dominant sphere of work, enabling them to make decisions on the quality and amount of inputs to be purchased.

### 3. Democratic decision-making through farmer members

The cooperative members were seen to have a very strong sense of peer community and solidarity, in line with the principles of cooperativism. The decentralised aagewan network enabled both: higher efficiency through hyperlocal aggregation and a fairer and more equitable distribution of resources and benefits across the community. The benefits were not limited to just cooperative members - as the cooperatives procured their inputs from the local farmers this ensured the corresponding fillip to other farmers as well, even though they sit outside the network of the cooperative.

Trust in the cooperative's governing body through the aagewan network had played a key role in enabling the democratic distribution of benefits as well. Analysing this further, the trust emerged due to two key strategies of the cooperative- firstly, the ongoing support provided by the FFC's manager in terms of providing every form of information required from sowing methods to the marketing of the harvest produce was a unique selling proposition, in comparison to any other agri-business centres.

The agri-business centres served as shops for input procurement. Secondly, the cooperatives acted as a link between the disconnected farmers and opportunities in the market or government schemes and made these available, affordable, and accessible to the local communities. The value of this link was realised, in part, by the revenue generated through allied activities, such as poultry farming and mushroom cultivation. In the period from April-October 2022, a total sale of INR 100,521, which was 9% of total revenue, was recorded by the cooperative. Through this, the FFC and cooperative were able to reach 350 farmers with both scheme-related information and relevant resources.

Ravinaben Jayanthibhai Chaudhari, the manager of the cooperative mentioned: *"When a scheme came to our notice, we created some awareness about the same through our digital platform. We also communicated the eligibility criteria as well as through the aagewan network we also identified a set of farmers who would benefit from the same. This was followed by helping them to fill out the documentation on government portals. Many of them didn't have the required documentation, and with help from our sister cooperative, we got everything in place."*

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The immersive levels of participation and multi-stakeholder structures facilitated decisions that were made based on the need of the end users who were also owners of the cooperative, by being the shareholders, and were also running the cooperative. This entailed involving the users in designing solutions, gathering and synthesising feedback from users into insights, and developing solutions based on feedback.

To this Ansuyaben Shivajobhai Vasava, the aagewan to manage the FFC in Uchchhal, a village and tehsil in Tapi district in Gujarat added to this as challenges they faced. She says, *“We have made it a practice to follow up with the farmers after each sale in terms of taking feedback and to check if they are facing any challenges. Once when I called a farmer, she mentioned about the seeds she bought from the FFC not germinating. On talking further, we identified it was the fertiliser she used didn’t suit the soil. We instantly called a meeting along with our technical support person. As we were figuring out, our solution was about to narrow it down to selling back the seeds that were left to another agro-business. Our solutions were just focused on preventing complete loss for our farmer.”*

The regular meetings and training sessions conducted by the cooperative members for farmer members enabled the creation of mutual understanding alongside trust. Another aspect of trust was built through the credit strategy adopted by the cooperative that enabled the farmers to access high-cost and high-quality farm inputs easily in instalments. Given the dependency of the occupation on climate conditions, it was more precarious in nature and farmers often faced economic instability. The credit strategy under the FFC had endeavoured to address the same. Farmers had the option of buying the agricultural inputs on credit from the cooperative and get paid as and when they sold the same. The interest rates and recovery process considered the realities of farmers and put lower penalties on them, especially compared to other available options in the market. This attracted more farmers as there was transparency in the system. As opposed to the agri-business unit that distributed free seeds and had a rigid recovery system post-harvest, the overall default rate was lesser at the FFC. The practice of deep involvement through follow-ups in terms of feedback and identifying challenges had enabled in upholding of this strategy.

A final finding was that the economic sustainability of FFCs was a question that was central to the cooperative. The fixed costs of running these centres must be offsetted by its income, else its survival would not be ensured. Keeping this in mind, Megha Cooperative co-designed a financial plan for its FFCs with the members.

While the details of the plan were outside the scope of this paper, it was found that the Farmers Facilitation Centre made a total sale of INR 11,11,182 from April- Oct 2022, which was more than 40% increase from its sale figures in April-October 2021, which were INR 7,92,705. The sub-centre opened in June 2022 and had contributed up to 21.68 % of revenue in this period.

In conclusion, the decentralised system ensures the active participation of all involved, whilst keeping women at the centre of the decision-making process. Their voices are being converted into actions, actions which ensure the local economic development of the farmers, especially the women farmers.

## **5. Conclusions: Moving Forward**

Changes in the larger economy have the potential to affect those at the base of the pyramid - particularly women - in meaningful ways, including in their everyday lives. As the nature of the economy undergoes changes, and there is a shift towards digital processes, within neoliberal ideas, women farmers are at risk of getting left behind. Through the work of SEWA Cooperative Federation and other global organisations that work with collective models of women’s entrepreneurship, it has been seen that cooperatives (and collective enterprises that work on cooperative principles) have the capacity to protect those at the base of the pyramid from shocks, as well as provide them with sustainable means to adapt to the changing economy.

In this paper, we have seen how Farmer Facilitation Centres, embedded in cooperatives, offer a decentralised approach to livelihood generation. Using a ‘phygital’ method of operation, they are able to effectively act as bridges between women, their communities and the larger macroeconomic system. At the same time, they are hyper-contextual and act in real-time, saving women time and money. Beyond providing resources such as seeds and tools,

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the FFCs provide services that support farmers in accessing information, markets and other resources for their everyday lives, including social protection.

Moving forward, such hyper-local forms of operation do need policy support in order to exist and thrive. SEWA Cooperative Federation's approaches to advocacy with various Ministries of national governments and state departments have outlined this support, which can be summarised as:

- Recognition of women-owned cooperatives as active economic players, coupled with more focused research on the contribution of these cooperatives in pulling women out of poverty
- Increased investment into these economic players, as well as the Federation, to allow them ease of business through capital support. The capital support schemes and policies should be reviewed to incorporate the lower capital needs of primary cooperatives, as the majority of women's cooperatives fall into this category.
- Promotion of goods produced by women's cooperatives by increasing its proportion in overall public procurement of produce. This should include ease of norms on public procurement platforms (eg. GeM).
- Capacity-building and training for women cooperators, in terms of management, marketing and other skills essential for the governance and operation of cooperatives. In the face of increased digitalisation, skills relevant to data and digital inclusion have also become crucial to ensure cooperative sustainability

These larger shifts will enable women-owned cooperatives and collective enterprises to sustain and scale, ensuring that no one is left behind. In her book on hundred-mile communities, Elaben Bhatt, outlines a sustainable means of production, which is producer-centric - *'if the six basic needs of daily life—food, clothing, housing, health, education, and banking can largely be met with locally, within a hundred-mile radius, people will find diverse, innovative solutions to the problems of poverty, exploitation, and environmental degradation. The reduced distance between the consumer and producer, and the producer and raw materials will empower the people to begin the process of restoring economic and political balance in the world. This is but one possible solution to the troubles of the world around us.'* (Bhatt, 2015)

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